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SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI - REQUEST FOR TDY SUPPORT FOR SOMALIA COVERAGE

REF: 3/22/09 SWAN-PATTERSON-WYCOFF EMAIL

1. Summary and Action Request: Post requests temporary assignment of one TDYer for 3 - 6 months to support coverage of Somalia developments from Djibouti. While continuing its responsibility to provide consular services for the Somaliland region, Embassy Djibouti sees growing demand and opportunity for other engagement on Somalia issues, in which Djibouti is playing an increasingly active role - diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. To capitalize on these opportunities, post requests a multi-functional TDY officer, working in close coordination with the Somalia Unit in Nairobi, to enhance Embassy Djibouti coverage during this critical period in USG efforts to support the Transitional Federal Government. With only one reporting officer assigned to Embassy Djibouti, we are simply unable to do justice to this important account without additional staff resources. End summary.

The Need

12. Djibouti is increasingly involved in regional efforts to bring peace and stability to Somalia. Djibouti's population is 60 percent ethnic Somali, as is its senior leadership, including President Ismail Omar Guelleh. Djibouti is playing an increasingly active role on Somalia issues including as host and key actor at the 2008-2009 "Djibouti Process" peace talks that led to the election of Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Sheikh Sharif. President Guelleh and Foreign Minister Mahmoud Youssouf are leaders in regional fora in pressing for solutions in Somalia. In addition to diplomatic support, Djibouti is providing training and other support to TFG forces. Djibouti is a hub for Somali journalists and websites covering Somalia, including the newly inaugurated Somali Independent News Agency (SOMINSA). It is the headquarters of the Somalia Business and Investment Council (SBIC) and home to numerous Somali businessmen. It is a frequent site for travel to/from Somalia, Somaliland, and Puntland by senior officials from these entities, including President Sharif, who is a regular visitor.

13. While post has sought to cover Somalia developments from Djibouti, to supplement the work of the Somalia Unit and other regional posts, we are unable to do justice to the rich opportunity here. Embassy Djibouti has only one full-time reporting officer, and she is fully occupied with domestic reporting, preparation of legislatively mandated reports, and management of project activities totaling some \$10 million.

The Proposal

¶4. In order to provide appropriate coverage to the important Somalia account, especially during this critical period in USG efforts to bolster the TFG and to prepare contingencies should that effort prove unsuccessful, we request a TDY officer for 3-to-6 months who could perform the following functions:

--Reporting: Maintain contact with influential Somalis based in or transiting Djibouti. These would include members of the Somali Business and Investment Council and visitors from Somalia, Somaliland, and Puntland transiting Djibouti. Presidents Sharif (TFG), Riyale (Somaliland), and Farole (Puntland) are all frequent visitors.

--Representation: Represent USG at Somalia-related conferences, meetings, etc. held in Djibouti. Recent conferences have focused on efforts to generate youth employment in Somalia and to improve the investment climate in Somaliland. We expect more such conferences, with their rich contact opportunities, in the future.

--Consular: Deepen contacts with Somaliland officials who would be useful in responding to request for emergency American citizen services. Build on work already begun by Djibouti CONOFF in her outreach to immigration, police, hospitals, etc.

--Public Diplomacy: Use the extensive network of Somali journalists based in Djibouti, as well as the GODJ's Somali-language broadcasts (which are also heard in parts of Somalia) to communicate USG messaging on Somalia, and help TFG with its strategic communications (STRATCOM).

--CJTF-HOA: Coordinate with Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa on Somalia issues, especially STRATCOM related to Somalia.

Action Request

¶5. Post requests Department identify and fund one TDY officer to be assigned for 3-to-6 months to perform the functions listed above. Depending on the results, we may seek to extend this arrangement. The individual could be an existing direct-hire employee available for TDY, someone seeking a bridge assignment, or a WAE. Horn of Africa experience and competency in the functions listed in para four would obviously be desirable. Embassy is open to the individual being assigned either (1) to Embassy Djibouti directly, or (2) to the Embassy Nairobi Somalia Unit and then deployed to Djibouti. Post can provide workspace and local transportation and may/may be able to provide TDY housing depending on the precise timing of the TDY.

¶6. Somalia Unit Counselor Robert Patterson has cleared this message.
SWAN